

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 587

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

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UNCLAS BANGKOK 6778

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: GENERAL KRIANGSAK EXPLAINS GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN COUP
ATTEMPT

REF: BANGKOK 6585

1. DURING A NEWS CONFERENCE HELD ON MAR 28, DEPUTY SUPREME
COMMANDER KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN DESCRIBED THE COUP ATTEMPT AS
"AN INFLATED BALLOON" WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO "DEFLATE
SLOWLY" TO AVOID VIOLENCE. HINTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD
THE COUP ATTEMPT ISOLATED AND UNDER CONTROL AT AN EARLY HOUR,
GENERAL KRIANG SAK SAID THAT THEY FIRST DECIDED TO INFORM THE
PEOPLE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS IN CONTROL AND TO ASK THEM TO
KEEP CALM. THEN THEY PROCEEDED TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING
WITH THE SOLDIERS OF THE 9TH DIVISION WHO HAD BEEN MISLED BY
THE RINGLEADERS, TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS. ONCE THIS WAS ACCOM-
PLISHED ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF HARDCORE REBELS AND THEIR
HOSTAGES REMAINED.

2. AT THAT POINT THE GOVERNMENT'S MAJOR CONCERN WAS THE SAFETY
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OF THE TWO MILITARY OFFICERS STILL HELD HOSTAGE. A CONTRA-
DICTIONARY CONCERN WAS THE PUNISHMENT OF THOSE WHO HAD COMMITTED
A CRIME. THEREFORE, THE GOVERNMENT "OPENED NEGOTIATIONS BY
ASKING THE COUP PLOTTERS TO RELEASE THE HOSTAGES. THEY COUN-
TER-PROPOSED THAT IF THEY WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY
THEY MIGHT NOT HARM THE HOSTAGES. IN ORDER TO SAVE THE LIVES
OF GENERAL PRASOET THAMMASIRI AND GENERAL PRALONG WIRAPRI,

THE GOVERNMENT CONTACTED SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS BEFORE TAIPEI FINALLY ACCEPTED TO ACCEPT THE PLOTTERS AS EXILES." HE LATER SAID EMPHATICALLY, "I HAVE A RADIO MESSAGE TO PROVE THAT TAIPEI AGREED TO ACCEPT THE FIVE." GENERAL CHALAT WAS STILL APPREHENSIVE THAT HE COULD BE SHOT DURING THE JOURNEY TO THE AIRPORT AND DEMANDED THAT GENERALS PRASOET AND PRALONG ACCOMPANY HIM TO THE AIRPORT AS HOSTAGES. AFTER FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS GENERAL CHALAT AGREED TO GO TO THE AIRPORT ACCOMPANIED BY GENERAL KRIANGSAK BUT THEN CLAIMED THAT THE HAD NO MONEY. KRIANGSAK TOLD HIM HE WOULD TRY TO OBTAIN SOME FOR HIM AND AT THAT POINT KRIANGSAK LEFT WITH CHALAT AND HIS FOUR CO-PLOTTERS FOR THE AIRPORT VIA CHALAT'S HOME.

3. ONCE AT THE AIRPORT KRIANGSAK ACCOMPANIED THE FIVE UP TO THE PLANE, AND THEY TURNED THEIR GUNS OVER TO HIM. THEY ENTERED AND THE PLANE ENGINES STARTED. KRIANGSAK SAID THAT AT THIS POINT "I WENT HOME AND LEARNED LATER THAT AS THE PLANE WAS ABOUT TO TAKE OFF, ORDERS CAME FROM TAIPEI THAT THE FIVE COULD NOT BE ADMITTED. THIS WAS BEYOND MY RESPONSIBILITY... WHEN THE PLANE REFUSED TO FLY THE FIVE TO TAIPEI, THE ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE TOOK THEM INTO CUSTODY. WE HAD DONE WHAT WE PROMISED. NOW WE COULD NOT DO ANYTHING WITHOUT VIOLATING THE PENAL CODE."

4. KRIANGSAK DENIED CATEGORICALLY THAT HE HAD GIVEN CHALAT ONE MILLION DOLLARS. HE DID SAY THAT HE HAD TAKEN 50,000 BAHT (\$2,500) FROM HIS WIFE AND GAVE IT TO CHALAT. KRIANGSAK SAID HE ALSO ASSURED CHALAT THAT CHALAT'S FAMILY SHOULD COME TO NO HARM.

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5. ACCORDING TO THE MAR 29 BANGKOK WORLD, TWO CIVILIANS WERE ARRESTED MAR 29 FOR FURTHER QUESTIONING ON THEIR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN THE COUP ATTEMPT OF MAR 26. THE EXTENT OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IS NOT KNOWN. THOSE ARRESTED WERE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR-GENERAL RAKSAK WATTHANAPHANIT AND WELL-KNOWN TV COMMENTATOR AND NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST PHICHAI WATSANASONG. THE FIRST HAD BROADCAST ANNOUNCEMENTS OVER REBEL-HELD RADIO THAILAND SUPPORTING THE ABORTIVE COUPLE THE LATTER IS SAID TO HAVE WRITTEN THE ANNOUNCEMENTS.

6. THERE ARE WIDESPREAD RUMORS IN BANGKOK THAT THAI NATION PARTY LEADERS WERE INVOLVED IN SUPPORT FOR THE COUP ATTEMPT. SO FAR, HOWEVER, NO EVIDENCE HAS BEEN MADE PUBLIC TO BACK UP THESE CLAIMS.

WHITEHOUSE

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